

A GUIDE → TO OVERCOMING ALL NOVEL EDITING HURDLES

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Introduction

Finishing your first book, you're so excited to get it out there.

You're beginning to think about those book-signing events, your book being adapted into a film or a drama series or maybe about you making a fortune like JK Rowling and other famous authors.

But in as much as you love your novel and you want it to be out there for your readers' consumption, you must have it edited first.

Why edit the novel? Praise is great, but not criticism.

You don't want your book to be criticized and reviewed badly later.

After all, authoring a novel and having it published is one legacy that makes a mark... your mark as a great author.

It is always important to be your worst critic or judge of your work, as they say. So before considering sending your work to potential agents and publishers, you must step back and do the right thing – edit the novel.

Let's get started in editing your book.

In this e-book, you'll get a basic guide on how to self-edit, get help from an editor, quotes from the authors, self-editing mistakes and things to check in your manuscript – all to make your story better before submitting it to multiple agents later.

In the last section is a bonus about some basic steps in getting your book published!

Good luck on your book's publishing journey!

Getting Down to Business: What to Check in the Manuscript

You're only halfway done when you have finished writing your novel. But don't let this deter you! The process of editing won't be hard for someone who's as determined to publish a must-read novel like you! See the next section for questions to ask when editing a novel.

Plot

- Is it engrossing, interesting and unique?
- Does my story make sense?
- Was I able to resolve the major plot issues in the novel?
- Did I support my story enough up to the final page?
- Are there too many subplots?
- Do I have a central plot or is it scattered and confusing?
- Did I use the right premise for the story I have written?
- Did I include logical hooks, which are related to the rest of the plot/s I used?
- Does my plot feel enough or very thin and shallow?
- Did I start the story in the right setting/place?
- Did I meet reader expectation? Did I make them satisfied upon reading my novel?
- Is my plot clear throughout the novel?
- Is the goal of the plot clear and strong enough? Is it met at the end of the novel satisfyingly?
- Do the subplots support and work well with the main plot of my story?
- Are my scenes well tied to support cohesiveness?
- Are there scenes in the plot that do not make a point?

Objectives of the Plot

- Keep forward movement of the story
- Resolve threads
- Move logically from one point to another; interesting
- Contain surprises
- Weed out coincidence

Tips

- Make sure to have both whether you chose to open the event or show the protagonist acceptance of his action the incident.
- Did you make a clear ending? See to it that it is enough to reveal the depth of the story.
- Check if your ending isn't dragging but satisfying to the readers.
- See if your ending is realistic and inevitable.
- Check for back-stories and be able to use them sparingly so that you can sustain the momentum of the novel's story.
- Make sure that the climax is enough for the story you've written.

Characters

- Are my antagonists good enough to complement my protagonist?
- Do I have interesting characters in my story?
- Are the goals of my characters clearly presented in the story?
- Strengths and weaknesses, do my characters have them?
- Character motivation: Did my characters show enough motivation for my story?
- Are my characters well rounded?
- Plot vitality: Are my lead characters important for my story?
- Did my lead characters show enough motivation to move through my plot?
- Is my main character worth sympathy from the very beginning?
- Do the characters represent their upbringing and background well in the manner they speak and behave in the story?
- How is the background of each character? Is it enough to invite reader interest? Do my characters have a need, a fear, a past and a dream? Are they brought out clearly from the beginning?
- Are the characters well developed with a rich background? Are they stereotypic and flat?
- Did I spend so much time on the secondary characters to the point that I detract from my main plot and focus on the character's story?
- Does the protagonist possess a strong and clear character showing his decision, change, growth and development towards the book's conclusion?

Tips

- See to it that you have used a sufficient number of characters for the story.
- Include secondary characters to support the main one.
- Fit the characters to the era, genre and purpose of the story.
- Check if you have included irrelevant characters.
- Show differentiation among characters. Each of them should have favorite words, habits, dreams, speech patterns, motivations, goals, quirks and hot buttons to keep them unique and easily distinguishable for readers.
- Include actions and reactions as well as thoughts to every character to make one 3-dimensional.

Check that all the major and minor characters in the story are needed in the story. They don't have to appear just for the sake of being there. You must make sure that they contribute to the story. For example, they must add to the plot's progression or development of another character.

In some cases, you might be able to detect if you have missed a character or two. In that case, you may have to bring another one on board to improve the story.

Setting Check

- Did I show it sufficiently? Is it appropriate for my story?
- Did the setting create the tone, advance the plot and increase/sustain the tension in my story?
- Did I provide readers with clear directions regarding the time and place for every scene?
- Had I chosen another setting, would it be better?
- Did I portray an interesting and realistic setting to draw my readers into the story?
- Are there too many locations used?
- Are the choices of the settings appropriate for the given scenes?
- Is the setting used enough to serve my plot and fit the mood of the story?
- Did I just present the settings in flat narrative or are they portrayed through the eyes of the character involved?
- Did I spend so much time in narrating and describing the locale for a scene?

Tips

Double-check facts used. Verify the details!

See to it that the setting does not overwhelm the plot as well as the action.

Check if the details used in the setting correct for each scene.

Make use of proper that the lead and supporting characters can use.

Dialogue

- Does it advance and move my story?
- Is the wording of each character appropriate for each of them? Is it also correct for the scene?
- Does it sustain or increase tension/conflict?

What My Dialogue Must Do?

See to it that each character is differentiated with the type or manner of their speaking and word choice, or certain speaking habits.

Use tags appropriate for the genre of your novel.

Use adverbs sparingly in the dialogue tags, unless necessary to use more.

Check that your dialogue is a dialogue and not a long conversation.

Scene Checklist

- Is there enough number of scenes to support the story?
- Do the individual scenes satisfy? Are they different from each other regarding action events, dialogue patterns and character combinations as well as conflict type?
- Do they have varying settings for each of them?
- Are the scenes presented in a clear and logical manner to present issues for the character as well as raise tension to the readers?

Do the scenes have varying depth, format and pattern?

POV: Point-of-View

- Did I use the correct POV for the scene and story? Had I used another, would that make my story better?
- Did I keep it within the scenes?
- Who must be the POV character for every scene?
- Did I present a clear POV?
- Should I change POV with scenes?

Goals of the POV

It should not be changed within scenes. See to it that the character's viewpoint is maintained within them, and that there is no head hopping.

See if you have changed the POV character when you needed to bring your character and story closer to your readers as well as hold their curiosity at a distance when needed.

Check if POV character is the only one who knows what he must really know.

Conflict

- Did I escalate the conflict correctly throughout the story?
- Did I use enough conflict for every scene and characters?
- Did you start the story with some internal or external conflict?
- Is the beginning conflict enough to introduce the bigger conflict that drives the protagonist towards his or her end goals?
- Are there too many or too few conflicts in the book?
- Is there are overreaching conflict, which must be the key to the premise of the story that must grow to a climax and then to a resolution?
- Does the main character face a conflict after another? The prior must be worse than the preceding, enough to force him or her to making a hard decision.
- Does the conflict serve its purpose to keep the story interesting or is it just thrown in the book to arouse interest and excitement?
- Is the main character embroiled or conflicted by his or her external conflict?

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What My Conflict Must Do?

- It should create tension.
- It must be escalating as your story moves toward the ending.
- It must make readers and characters feeling pressured or uncomfortable.
- It must be present among your characters as well as between the main character and him/herself as well as within the villain or antagonist of the story.

Editing the First Chapter

So you're done with the first chapter, now what to do next to ensure you're on the right track for a great fiction? For what to achieve, keep reading the next section.

Is the main character introduced?

You may want to ensure that you have opened the first scene with the main character in the book.

The readers meet him or her first in the story. They want to feel a connection with this character, as he or she is the one that they will bond with in the entire story.

Readers won't know much about the story in the beginning, but they want to know if there is someone to care enough.

They want to be introduced with the hero of your story.

You need to describe your character in the first chapter, maybe introduce how he looks like, his age, gender or maybe status on the society. You also have to let them know about the character's emotions in the scene – an emotion that they can relate to upon reading.

For a better technique, you should show, not tell the readers how the character look like. So a better way could be implying how you want readers to see the character from their seats.

This is effective writing. It happens when your readers are able to imagine that she is female or he is male, that he/she lives in the countryside, that he/she isn't rich and that he/she is employed or not – all without telling but showing them through use of scenes with great description.

In the first chapter, you must keep the readers' interest. They must be able to feel the need to keep reading, and they must care and be willing to go through the journey of the main character towards achieving his wants or goals in the story.

They should be able to relate with the struggles that the protagonist will face to reach his life aspirations or dreams or to conquer his fears.

However, it could be trickier than it sounds.

What can make them care or give their time to reading your story; it is what you must find out.

The harder part is that there is no specific formula to achieve this goal of making readers concerned to read and then **KEEP READING YOUR PROSE.**

What you're more likely be told than not by editors and agents, "We need a sympathetic main character."

However, this does not mean making a protagonist, who everyone wants to become friends with, as no reader would like a perfect protagonist either.

Instead, they want a flawed but strong character that has the resources and means to overcome his struggles despite his own fears and the obstacles coming his way.

For example, do you remember Scarlett O'Hara? She's not perfect. In fact, you might have hated her at some points of reading about her, but you have to admit that you find her fascinating as well.

By saying this though does not mean that, you must create an imperfect character, but at least you need to show that your character also has his or her weakness just as anyone else has, and that you must be able to show it!

As you see, it is writing realistically. Nobody is perfect, and a character isn't perfect either.

"Some readers want a kickass character; some want an honorable hero. For comedic heroes, they want someone lovable so that they could accept his faults, which make the comedy more exciting. At the end of the day, create and achieve balance of both strengths and weaknesses in your character."

TIP: Readers don't want a whiny, victim mentality or arrogant hero. They won't sympathize with any of these attributes. Instead, the hero should be brave, and so you must be able to show it in the right way.

Set the tone

When editing the first chapter, start out with an exciting scene – a thriller perhaps, or maybe write something about the gruesome murder that took place. Of course, it depends on the genre you’re writing. The goal here is to **IMMERSE THE READER** into the world you’re offering in the book right from the first paragraph.

Convey tone with your words because you cannot use music or props to set it.

However, it does not mean you need to write long descriptions to set the scene.

For example, do not write too long about the weather, let’s say. Instead, you may want to offer a wide range of strokes to set the mood of the story.

You may want to open humorous and light or write about the distress that the hero is facing.

But aside from descriptions in setting the tone, you may want to use dialogue to convey the mood or danger, for instance. You may also use the hero’s narrative voice to invoke laughter for readers, as another technique. Again, it depends on the genre you’re writing.

Check the theme – and see if you’re able to convey it

If you want to discuss a specific theme in the story, you don’t need to hit it straight to the heads of the readers. Instead, offer something that gives them foreshadowing.

“The best authors can use foreshadowing right from the first sentence.”

Lead the readers to where you want them to be

In fiction writing, readers don’t watch the action, but they take part in it. They imagine and relate to the characters through their subconscious mind and eventually digest things there.

They become a part of the action.

Thus, you must let them know where they are, which place, which scene, who are the characters involved and what is happening.

For example in the setting, you don't have to use as much description, but you should at least let them know what historical time they are in and what planet it is.

Even if you have to show, not tell, sometimes you need to so that you can provide readers with basic information in a direct manner.

Then in a fantasy or science fiction, you should build the world, but only limit that to the absolute necessities so that you can fill in the gaps and details later. Do not tell too much, in short.

Input just enough to make them see the big picture, which is happening, but do not bog down into the action in the first chapter.

Welcoming the antagonist

A story isn't a great one without the antagonist. It could be objects, nature, people, or the hero himself.

What is an antagonist? If you need some reminders, the antagonist is something or someone that keeps the hero from reaching his goals.

What is the concept of this character? Knowing it is one of the most challenging aspects of fiction writing, especially for new authors.

You need an antagonist – and yes, even if you're writing about a sadistic serial killer or a spy.

The antagonist could be,

- An addiction
- The entire society
- The judicial system

Or anything that stops your hero to win his battle, conquer his fears, or achieve his goals

You must ignite the conflict!

You don't need to have it in the first scene, but you need one to make readers see the tension - which is what drives your plot forward.

However, conflict does not have to be the battle itself. In other cases, it can be starting in the middle of the war, but that can be confusing for readers. So do not commit the mistake.

Instead, you may want to start with a scene showing that the main character is preparing for the war or battle through stealing his father's armor because the latter does not want him to fight.

What are the goals of the protagonist?

Tell your readers what the hero wants to get or achieve. It might be finding his parents whom he has not met since he was born.

So from the very beginning, you must be able to give readers the idea of what your hero is trying to achieve in the story.

They want to know the ultimate goal of the main character. In some cases though, the main goal isn't revealed in the first chapter, but at least readers need to know some sorts of goal in the first chapter to lead in the next or ultimate goal.

Did you present a life-changing event in your story?

Remember that it must be something to happen that will propel readers to the next scene, and then the one after that, and then through the entire fiction book. You must think of this incident as an explosion, which will launch your story's rocket.

It must be easier for other genre writers, but then if you're writing a mystery story, a character can find a dead body in the river... and from then the story will be off and running.

In other fiction genres, it will be harder to create an inciting incident in the first chapter or close to the opener.

However, you will have to work on it because all other things will look like a throat-clearing one to the reader. Many readers do not admire novels until you have a strong story that moves forward from one exciting event to another and another, and they keep holding on and hooked to find out the turnout of events or the outcome of the hero in achieving his end goals.

Get to the other major characters

In this part, you should not let minor characters upstage your hero in the first chapter. You might better off go without the minor players in the introduction. You should not cram so much stuff in the beginning.

You don't want to ruin your novel with the delivery boy who would open your story. In short, enter with a bang. As you may already know, the first chapter must serve as the hook to the entire story.

You should introduce the major characters in the first chapter. In short, you must not clutter up your opener with so many colorful characters who are not going to appear again in the story later. It will be irritating to the reader who is expecting people in the opener.

These are the people that will reappear and will play important roles in the novel.

Things to Check Next

Balance

Check for balance in the chapters, scenes, sections and actions. There should be balance in the characters' actions, thoughts and dialogue, along with description and setting. It must be present between story elements and no element is overwhelming.

You must also fine-detail all areas.

See to it that you have used correct punctuation, grammar and spelling. Double-check, and never assume that they're 100% correct. You must also keep the three consistent throughout the novel.

Tension

- Is it presented during the onset of the story?
- Did I make use of hanging scenes to create and sustain reader tension?
- Is my main character interesting to increase reader tension, making him care about the fate of the protagonist?
- Are the clues and details necessary to move the story and invoke tension in the hearts and minds of my readers?

Emotion

- Did I show character emotion properly?
- Did I tap into the emotions of my readers? Did I raise their curiosity and interest?
- Did I go after at least one emotional event in my story?

Motivation

Remember that checking for this aspect is important. Know that the characters, in one way or another, represent real people in real life. They must be doing things for a reason.

They should want something – a goal. Thus, it is your job to convey what these goals are in your writing. You must also be able to show the ‘why’ aspect of their motivation – or things that drive them.

As you see, all people have a reason. When reading your draft, check if you have established those reasons in the story, even if you didn’t reveal it until the very end of your novel.

TIP: To understand the character’s motivation, you have to ask each one of them questions – in your mind. You must be able to show some things you have learned about them in your story.

Pacing

- Did I use varying paces throughout the story?
- Is the pace influential to the tone of the story?
- Is the pace used correct for every scene?
- Does it decrease or increase tension?

- Did I make use of overwhelming and excessive narration?
- Do I need to trim the scenes?
- In faster paced scenes, did I make use of shorter paragraphs and sentences?
- Are my sentences repetitive and too long?

Pacing is important in the manipulation of time within the novel. You may find it hard to keep up with your story's events, or readers may find it unbelievable – with the unrealistic progression of the story. A too slow pace isn't good either. It will send readers to sleep or maybe boredom at the very least.

Just like for other elements, you need to keep control with the pace so that your story's speed will be aligned with the diagram of the plot. One tip: The pacing near the climax of the story must be faster. And overall, you should balance your novel with fast-paced interjected with some slow scenes, or a mix of the speed in short.

Style

Enhance your style provided it has purpose for your story.

Check for a cohesive style.

Perform a fact check: If you've used inventions, technology, historical figures, and important dates, double check and verify your sources. You need to verify everything that needs it.

Regarding word choice, remove repetitions in the story as you edit. You must also check the dialogue of the characters, and they must be correct to represent the scene, genre and era. You must also cut out irrelevant words that only take up space, not add value.

Know how humor can affect the tone, character and plot. Make use of it only when needed.

Choose strong and specific verbs to keep your writing style clear. Get rid of weak phrasing or wording as you go. If you have spotted pet words and clichés, cut them out.

Make every word and sentence count. Do not sacrifice quality just because you want to meet the word count requirement of a publisher. Check for sentence construction. There must be a varying construction in your story to avoid a monotonous tone, which will quickly send readers to sleep or cause them boredom.

See to it that each character is given distinguishably unique to them sentence construction.

For rhythm, check for it and find out if you have used annoying patterns.

Time

See if you have used time in a clear manner – showing the readers when the story has taken place, when a scene is happening.... In short, see to it that your readers will understand the timing of the events and scenes in your story.

Voice

Did I make use of a unique, original and fresh writing style?

Is my voice sounding unoriginal or a derivative of an already existing writing?

Is the overall style and tone of the work fit for the entire story?

Do I sound as if I was trying to impress my audience using complex words and sentences and too many clichés?

Did I meet the intended tone, which must be correct for the story?

Clarity

Check if you have made it section clear as to the scene, chapter and dialogue.

General Questions to Ask

- Did you arouse care, aside from curiosity, in the readers' minds in terms of your story's dilemma and characters?
- Did you entertain readers or bore them to death?
- Did the story make sense or was it too shallow to give attention?
- Did your story move quickly enough?
- Did you capture your readers' minds and hearts upon reading the story?
- Did you double-check the elements in the story? Did the dialogue move the plot forward, reveal each character and increases the conflict?

- Does the book hold together with a strong plot? Does its premise make sense and compelling?
- Did I miss any missing scenes to make a stronger story?
- Is my book's idea original?
- Is it too long or too short?
- Is it enough to cover universal topics or themes to attract readers?
- Did I clearly show the theme in the title, introduction and conclusion?
- At the end of the story, do my readers feel a sense of completeness? Or is my ending vague and dissatisfying?
- Is my audience well defined from the beginning? Or did I present problems, which may be too complex for young readers or may be very technical for their comprehension level?
- Are there too many violent or sex scenes inappropriate for the books

How to Edit Your Book

Use the following checklist to edit your book per section. While the process does not sound fun at all, it is worth your while to go through the task. It is not as bad as much you'd think it is.

Get your beat sheet and make changes

It won't have subheadings.

You are going to revise the beat sheet in order to check for the story elements, and make them cleaner to hang better.

Check your writing

Well, yes, this sounds like much work. But as said, it is rewarding in the end. This is to ensure your prose isn't garbage.

You must see that you showed, not tell. Are you telling so much instead of telling?

Are there information dumps? Are you presenting information, but did not verify the source?

Use interior monologue sparingly. While first person italics are good, they must not be used excessively. In some cases when your character is alone, it might not

be bad to use interior monologue to illustrate his thoughts; however, do not overdo it, or else you'll send readers to sleep.

Is your character too busy in conversations or dialogues? Use a balancing act! For example, is your character doing something in the dialogue, or do you want to remind readers that the character is there when maybe he is just standing to one side?

Too much of the minor details, such as unwrapping a gum or scratching a head makes the dialogue too scattered and busy, although too little of it makes the conversation unrealistic and drab. Thus, seek for balance – but have fun!

Oh and those figures of speech – simile and metaphor, are there too much of it in the novel. While you're probably looking to add spice or color to your writing, excessive use of figure of speech isn't interesting for readers at all.

Regarding point of view or POV, make it consistent and focused to avoid head hopping. See to it that it belongs to the character for that it is meant.

Check the characters

Regarding characters - check if the main character or protagonist in the story does not change much from the first draft towards the end of the novel.

In each scene, you have to see how or if the main character is developing a bit or is changing at all. You need to pay much attention to this aspect when the main character is the POV used in the novel.

If you find no character development, you should ask yourself for revision or deletion of a scene. In some cases, an author might even have to zap an entire section because it was not able to advance the story or the characters.

About checking specific characters, see if you have worked on certain aspects of the characters in scenes where they appeared.

Review the scenes

Check on the scene structure such as the conflict, goal and setback. See if your scene meets the criteria. If it is an action scene, see to it that it is.

For the reaction scene, check if it is a decision, dilemma or reaction and find out if it meets the criteria.

If a particular scene does not match the other's structure, then what is it? Did you only clog up your story and you need to fix and polish this scene or get rid of it completely?

In the particular scene, is it centered on the right character? You should not struggle on this aspect and be able to work the right person used in the POV. The character in POV should have the most to lose in the scene. If not, then you should fix the section to make it work.

Structure checks

Use generic names, including plot point 1, plot point 2 and so on. This list must be conforming to the structure laid out. You may also use Acts 1...

More tips

The human brain is the one digesting your story. Thus, your story must also satisfy it. In writing, the story must have,

- A beginning, middle and ending
- Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl in a romance story
- A thesis, antithesis, synthesis

Have the basics written down even if there are different theories on the correct structure of a story.

Check specific scenes

Make another list of things to remind you of important points. These can be the things you would like to develop when you get to the revision stage of your novel. Making this list helps you go back to those you want to elaborate further later.

Read your novel - aloud

Why do you need to do it? This is the best way to improve your writing and to get rid of the clutters in your story.

By reading it aloud, you can slow down and catch for mistakes, including on grammar and punctuation. Catching while reading it aloud can make your prose appears clearer than reading it silently. Checking your novel through self-editing is time-consuming, yet it is one of the best things you could do for yourself. You can work your way through this stage for every section of your novel to ensure that you're on the right track.

Tips

- Before publishing your book or finding an agent for it, you should print your manuscript out to read it aloud. Have it printed on a 12-pt font, double-spaced and single-sided.
- Put the manuscript on your desk or table, and then start turning the pages by reading it aloud.
- Have a pen with you and take down notes.
- Do not rush reading aloud though. You must do it in your normal tone of voice, as if you're reading for your kids or friends.

More Self-Editing Tips

Check your novel before seeking outside help such as hiring book editors or beta readers. The following are the most common mistakes committed by part time authors and new writers.

Does the world need your novel? Why do you think so?

More books are published, but many of them stay in the shelf, online or offline, and ignored. So before you get your precious work out there, know why the world needs the story.

Know what you are publishing and what your purpose is. Reflecting sounds like fun, but it does serve another important point. You should listen to your voice and attract your inner audience. Sharpen your focus to make self-editing easier. You cannot sharpen the prose if you don't know what to say or why say it.

How is your novel's hook?

Know that readers now have short attention span. They also have millions of books and e-books to choose from and read. When self-editing, find out if you have a strong hook in the opening pages, which will persuade readers to keep reading, interested to find out what happened to the main character in the story.

- Sit down and pretend you're one of them.
- Why should I spend money on this book?
- Why should I care?
- Why should I spend my time reading it?
- Is it worth reading at all? Or should I just go watching a drama series for entertainment?

IN SHORT, MAKE YOUR READER CARE!

How do you do that? Check if your writing is irresistible. You owe your readers with that. After all, it is how and why you're writing a book.

Who is your main character?

People won't care if your hero is a jerk. Know that they are your hero, in their imagination. They can relate well to the main character. That's why you need to make them relate to the protagonist in the story.

They need that connection with the hero. They want to understand this hero, although some may not want to be like your hero. At least, they have to care for him.

However, it does not mean you make an unrealistic perfect hero. They find it irritating. You must write and work on flawed heroes and interesting villains.

At the end of the day, you must ask yourself, "Does my hero make my readers turn the next pages to read more?"

Then, check on what your main character wants. What are his goals? What are the obstacles keeping him from getting what he wants?

Give readers a hero they can relate to – someone that is sympathetic and has a goal. He should have the strength in pursuing those goals. By ensuring of a very certain hero in your novel, you can make a great story. So, see to it that your hero has clear, defined goals, there are obstacles keeping him from achieving those, and he has the strength to overcome those struggles towards his end goals.

Who's the complex villain?

Every story has an equally interesting villain. Villains are what make stories come alive – more! They add spice and interest to the conflict of the protagonist in the story.

Villains are obstacles for the hero. They are the opposing forces that keep the main character away from his goals in the story.

In some cases, the hero and the villain are the same character. It is like man versus himself. For example, someone battling addiction can be the hero and villain in the story. He is struggling to get the monkey off his back. So it is he versus himself.

Sometimes, it can be nature (villain). For example, the villain can be the storm for sailors who are trying to survive at sea during the harsh weather.

"If you're choosing a human villain, then see to it that he still have a touch of goodness."

Is there a nail-biting suspense?

All great stories must have suspense – that moment when readers want to see the struggle of your hero. They want to know if he succeeded or failed in meeting the end goal. In short, they doubt in their minds what the result was. They want to read and get to the point of nail biting and on to the edge of their seats and asking – "Is he going to win or lose?" It does not mean that you need to come up with a thriller or a serial killer story. It could be about dogs anyway. Is the dog sympathetic? Does he want something that readers can relate to? What kinds of challenges did he face along the way and

are those exciting opposing villains? If you were successful in creating this suspense in the story, then this is the yes-no-but wait formula in action.

Have you looked into the chapter breaks?

This is one of the most challenging parts of working out a book. Some of us don't know where to begin and where to end each chapter. What makes it more challenging is that each of them must have,

- A hook – beginning
- A cliffhanger – ending

Even if you're not writing a thriller or suspense story, you need to have these elements present in each of the chapters.

Remember, you want people to read your book. They don't owe you anything. You owe them this right to making them want to read your novel.

Again, they owe you nothing. Your main role is to make them care about reading. Ensure that you achieve this goal. A good editor can help you make readers want to care too, if you're going to seek one's help to edit your novel.

Whose head is in the scene?

When writing a novel, you have to connect with readers at their subconscious level. It's your job.

For authors who have just entered fiction from film often commit the mistake of omitting monologues in their work. Remember that a successful novel is to penetrate the readers' heads. They want to be inside the action, not only watching it at a distance.

Fiction books are the windows into people's souls. Good authors can give their readers a personal experience, which isn't in other writing medium. This personal experience can be deep or shallow.

It depends on what the genre is asking. Nevertheless, the personal experience must be present. Your book shouldn't be a dry account of a few events, which may be good in writing history or biography books, but not in fiction.

Its goal is to connect to the readers in their minds.

Is there head hopping?

Some prose has this problem. Yours shouldn't have it. It happens when you're jumping from one's head to another's head from one paragraph to the next. It can jar out your story.

You need to separate POVs into individual chapters if your story calls for multiple of them. Another method is separating point of views with section breaks.

It could be – some pages for one character, and then other pages for another character.

How's my dialogue?

Writing it and acting as the same craft, which is why advanced film and theaters writers write great dialogues.

A character speaks because he or she wants to achieve something from another. Do you remember your hero and his goals? And what are the struggles he has towards those?

A scene's conflict could be fencing with words or a swordfight. When writing the dialogue, strengthen it with a fight sequence such as parry... thrust....etc. They will verve and make the dialogue alive and believable. They also make the characters pop off!

You may want to take acting classes if you're struggling to write a good dialogue.

What's the conflict in the story?

Why do people read fiction? They don't just read to watch the building of a house to be completed. They read because they want DRAMA. Yes, let's say that again, DRAMA.

You should present them a conflict on every page to sustain their interest and keep them engaged in the story.

Do not submit your work to an editor without looking at every page. You must spot the conflict or tension on every page. Check for an actual battle or a word fight on each page. Readers are always looking for an excuse to put the novel down. Don't make them want to do that. Spot dead pages and get rid of them. If not, readers would stop reading and start yawning instead. Then, they'd toss your book into the shelf.

Did you put much attention to the exposition?

This is the thing. When writing fiction, you don't burn a couple of pages just to describe a character, let's say.... The "once upon a time...." is acceptable to illustrate what your character looked like the annoying stepmother, the martyr princess..., but today's readers have changed.

They want a more exciting personal experience reading your book. They don't want to spend so much time reading a long introduction or description or exposition! Offer them what they want quickly – which is to want them to care reading.

How could they if they had to read a long exposition, dry accounts of something..., and this is the commercial reality you need to accept.

If you want to become a successful fiction author, you must write according to the changes of the time, not the way you want to – that's what you need to put in mind.

Only use the exposition if it is necessary to advance the story. Other than for the purpose, you must skip it.

Am I repetitive?

Don't say a thing twice. Only do it once.

Do not come to think that writing about things repetitively makes writing better or stronger. In fact, it makes writing dry and weak.

Readers pay attention. They are engaged to keep reading. Why do you have to remind them again of that something you already said? They want to move forward to the story. They don't want to be told the same thing over again.

Repetitive writing annoys readers. What readers are looking for instead are details and clues to the next events, not the same thing they already know.

An exception to the rule though – is if you’re writing a comedy. Repetition is acceptable to make the punch line funnier, but that must be done only THREE TIMES. However, the fourth time isn’t acceptable. It makes the joke stupid sounding.

Am I able to sustain unpredictability or “doubt in the readers’ minds” in the story?

Delight readers by writing loads of surprises. You don’t have to be formulaic in writing. You don’t also need to be that movie writer that was not able to make the ending a mile away from what readers expected to see.

What do your readers expect to happen next? Is it that the boy marrying the girl in the end of the story? In that case, you may want to twist their expectations! You can do the opposite. However, you must be careful. You don’t do it all the time.

What your mission should be is to write in a way that will make your readers a bit off balance and on the edge of their seats because they don’t know what will happen next.

Did I respect my readers?

You’re not the center why you’re writing fiction. Your readers are. They don’t care how you feel nor want to hear what you think. They want an emotional experience in reading your story.

Don’t take the shortcut. Do not only tell readers, they want you to show them.

Do not make them feel stupid by patronizing them. They know how to figure things out themselves. You don’t have to spoon feed them what’s next by telling them.

Regarding fiction, it is about knowing what to leave out and what to put in. Create a balance of the two. You don't need to tell all; readers can figure things out if you'd just let them by leaving out just as much as what you're putting in.

You must respect their intelligence, so you can get the same level of respect for your brilliance in creating a great story for them.

Is my prose filled with adverbs and adjectives?

Adverbs and adjectives patronize the readers. These fiction elements must die.

Remember, a novel is a skeleton of emotional experience for the readers. When they are able to digest this skeleton, it can produce emotional experience for them.

According to experts, readers add flesh to the story with their imaginations. Thus, authors must be able to leave slices of the story to their imaginations.

Avoid and get rid of adjectives and adverbs in the story because they tell everything to readers. They do not want this approach. They want you to give them only enough to put the pieces to their imaginations.

Did you remember? The story must connect to their brains and satisfy it. It won't do well on that department if you don't give their brains just enough to connect the dots and figure things out themselves.

If you succeeded here, you will make a great memorable story because you'd be able to give an emotional experience that readers could remember and share with friends.

Are there clichés in my fiction?

Writing in an unpredictable manner is one of the keys to successful fiction. In that case, you must sustain unpredictably both in the sentence level and story level. While readers are hungry to understand the world – and metaphor would help. But using overly used and stale imagery won't do you good.

You should surprise your readers by offering them new ways on how to look at the world – with fresh metaphors.

Ask yourself some questions,

- What are you trying to say?
- What words could best express what I want to say?
- What idiom or image can make it clearer for my readers' minds?
- Is the idiom fresh to deliver that effect?

Why do you need to answer these questions? It is to check if your writing will have an effect to the readers.

Did I write about politics?

Readers won't pay if you preach them.

Infusing politics in your fiction is one of the most effective ways to shoo them away.

Remember that fiction is not the right medium to express your activist's views.

Know that no one would like to be preached at, and why would readers pay if they'd be?

Communicating a political message through fiction originates from your conscious mind and then it is digested by someone's conscious mind too.

This is not the goal of fiction.

It is not consumed to satisfy one's conscious mind, but the unconscious.

So instead of writing to bring up your view of the world and prove your point, write about commercial popular fictions – which connect to the subconscious minds of the readers.

We're hoping this insight would help you as much as it helped others.

Remember that your subconscious mind will automatically choose the characters, the plot and the villains to support your view of the world.

Thus, you don't need to use fiction in writing about your conscious mind's view of it.

In sex scenes, did I leave something for the imagination of my readers?

You're not writing an erotic, so leave something to the imagination of your readers. It is one of the keys to effective fiction writing. You don't tell, but you show. Let readers figure things out their own, skip the adjectives and adverbs and use fresh imageries.

Imagination is critical to sex scenes. Nothing could be more boring than a dry sex scene, which is poorly written.

The goal of sex scenes is to evoke the imagination. If you want to create a steamy one, you must know what to leave out – more importantly – than what you put in.

Is my writing producing an emotional experience to readers?

As you already know, your main goal as a fiction author is to create an emotional experience for your readers. So what comes from the brain should go to the brain too. Unless you're writing something intellectual, a manuscript must be emotional in all cases.

Speaking of an emotional experience, did you invite emotion by withholding it? Just to describe how your character feels isn't enough to affect the hearts of readers.

But what about watching a movie, which suddenly sent you crying? What did you think of that moment? Did you imagine "oh, she has a horrible fate," and you felt sympathy for her.

With that, the writer was able to produce emotion to the viewer. So again, you don't need to tell readers how your character feels, but show them. The audience knows how to put pieces together on their own, remember? And through their imagination is the only way that they could feel the pain or loss of the character, say.

Was I able to convey mastery of the story with my confident voice?

Did you express exuding confidence in your prose? Were you able to make the readers feel that you are the master of the novel? You must have shown it with your great control of the story, being exactly sure of what you have to say and how you're going to express it... and most importantly by showing that you meant saying it.

Readers can pick up that confidence in you.

Your confidence is your weapon to tell a story. It is how you will seduce them, not the words you're using it. Remember, you and your readers must be in love with the story, and that there is only you and them.

Do you need to change something?

Know things to change and leave. Sometimes, you cannot spot this in your writing the first time, which is why you need to read your draft. For help, create another list and take down notes about potential problems in every section in the draft that are "ambiguous." You may want to address this later in editing, but make sure you create a list of these things.

Are there local and global issues present?

Take note that global issues should involve novel-wide changes. These changes need edit in the entire draft. For instance, if you think that the dynamic between the two characters need modification, then a global issue is present.

The local issues are only for specific scenes or groups within the scenes involved. Examples of these are reworking the dialogues on page 90, page 100....

However, Veronica Roth suggested that...

The local issues can become global ones when you add another scene and then you need to edit the remaining draft in order to give justice to that scene. It also happens when you delete a scene but then also have to get rid of all subsequent mentions of the particular scene.

In all cases, you should always try your best to divide the “problems table” as well as the possible solutions, and separate them as global issues and local issues. You can use color-coding and highlighters in order to create markings.

When finding the issues, you should spot for global issues first, and it is because their solution may make you remove specific scenes that have the local issues.

Self-Editing Mistakes

They say that clarity comes with editing, and the easiest way to achieve is to edit.

Editing is important to correct the mistakes you have committed the first time around. You are the first editor of your work before you would hire a professional to do it for you later. If you have edited well, you can save so much money, time and misunderstanding between you and your editor.

Some authors, however, commit mistakes when performing a self-edit. Now to know those self-editing mistakes, check out the following.

Ignoring the typos and spelling mistakes

Run a spell check if you have reached the end of your draft. You can do it in Word or use a tool online. From there, you can see the mistakes you have committed through simply running your manuscript through the spelling check tool.

If you’re using Word and you notice too many of those green and red, decide whether to ignore or change. You may also add it in the dictionary.

Reading your manuscript as a writer

This is another mistake. It isn't enough. You may be checking for grammar and spelling, but you might not be checking for its flow and structure.

For a solution, you must read your work aloud – but in a normal and slow tone.

Hearing yourself out can give your brain more time and room for listening to your thoughts and awkward word choices. You must read thoroughly... and again slowly.

Using hackneyed phrases

Using overly used phrases is another mistake to avoid. It robs you off your own writing style.

To fix it, recognize them in your writing and eliminate them in the final draft.

Confusing words

Some words and phrases confuse us. In that case, we misuse them. Examples are words like affect and effect, advice and advise and so on. To solve it, keep a list of those words you commonly misuse. Run a search of those words in your manuscript.

Missing commas

Did you already eat grandma? While this mistake might have made you laugh, it just showed how a missing comma could ruin the meaning of a sentence.

To fix it, read your manuscript and sort out the mistake. Ask beta readers to look for this type of mistake in your writing if you're using them.

Overusing punctuation

Don't think that shorter sentences make your writing too simple. In fact, it is effective in novel writing.

To spot on such mistakes, look for sentences containing too many commas; these must be divided into two sentences. You should also look for too many semi-colons in your sentences.

Which among these mistakes are you making?

They are not necessarily bad. All of us make mistakes.

We all can write. With practice, we can write better.

For the next section, let's check out some ways on how to edit the manuscript. Using tools or editors? Let's find out.

Enlisting an Editor's Help for the Book

New writers who struggle in editing their book seek help from an experienced fiction editor. He or she has the knowledge and skills in performing thorough editing and making your book an important published item later. But then, you may be asking certain questions about editing. See the following section for more about getting help of a professional editor.

What does a good editor do?

Good editors will not only point out errors. They will exactly explain why these are errors. They can provide you with insights and education to perform a better rewrite – to make a stronger story that must be read and not thrown in the shelves.

For example, they can point out sections where you have violated point of views. This is one of the major reasons a manuscript is rejected by agents and publishers. Good editors can provide you with a detailed explanation with easy to understand examples.

They also encourage writers while at the same time complimenting them of their strengths. They will also not hold back in telling you about

your weaknesses and things to improve in your writing. An editor can also point out repeated mistakes throughout the novel.

One won't also judge you. They will not expect that you already knew everything about book publishing. They also don't expect that you are familiar with all the **publishing rules** because it is their job to ensure that you're following those guidelines. In short, good editors help you understand how to become a better writer with the principles and basics of fiction writing.

Expert editors also recognize that your book is your baby; thus, you have spent many hours in the writing process. Their job is to dress the book the best that it can be, so they sometimes ask for making significant changes.

Good editors are on your side – they want to help you get your book in the best shape as possible.

Why do you need a book editor?

You must get rid of all mistakes in your writing in advance if you're looking to submit it to traditional publishers who implement hard rules to follow. These publishers may not be your best friends at all. In fact, they won't publish a book that does not really suit their expectations.

Rejection is what could be waiting for your book if you don't get rid of the major and minor issues it has. The editor will be the one to check on those issues and help you spot those. In fact, one can also provide you with suggestions on how to achieve a better flow of your story in most cases.

By getting help from one, you can maximize positive impressions you'll get from the publisher.

The same goes with self-publishing. If you're looking to self-publish, your book will have to go through the same strict edits. And that is if you want to make a lasting impression for your readers.

If you want to get the most out of your self-publication, make sure to have your book thoroughly edited to avoid any potential criticisms from readers, fellow authors and other people.

Take note: some self-publishing companies are also using a full editing package before approving your book for publishing. You will have to pay for it if your book needs so much editing. You can waive that fee if you'd submit a well-edited book.

What can you get from a book edit?

Many editors will mark your manuscript and provide you with suggestions on how to fix sentences that need it. So, you should address these issues on every page, and then the major mistakes in a rewrite. Depending on the degree of the errors, you may have to do a huge rewriting of the book.

However, do not think that an edit will increase your chances to be published. It all depends on the quality of the rewrites you have included in the book based on the advice of the editor.

Also, the edit isn't an excuse for you not to do further work on the book, but the opposite may sound true for most writers. You have to rewrite after an edit to improve your piece.

So again, there is no guarantee that your book will be published by following the editor's suggestion and advice. You will not also improve its chances for publishing by correcting typos, grammar and spelling mistakes.

But at the end of the day, you will have a higher chance of publishing the book if you would follow the suggestions from the editor on the changes to make in the manuscript. As a writer, you must consider the edit as a learning experience.

How do you choose a good editor?

If you're looking to submit your work to traditional publisher and you don't want to face rejection, you should have someone with a publishing record. You must also look for an editor that has clients who has become published authors.

Good editors have experience in the field. They don't only know how to correct grammar and spelling mistakes, but they must know more than that. They must have been able to work with published authors, and they must have that editorial capacity for book publishing. Some of them might have also written and published books for themselves. In short, look for editors with the professional experience. If you could, you might want to find someone who is also an experienced novelist. They don't just check for style and grammar, but they can also help you with your novel regarding its plot, pacing, voice, tension and other essential elements of a great novel.

Now if you only need proofreading, then editing to this level might not be needed. But it is the opposite if you want a substantive edit/content edit. For it, you need to look for an editor who also happens to be an author.

Newbie writers sometimes confuse proofreading with editing. Any expert in English can proofread the manuscript for bad grammar, incomplete sentences and punctuation errors.

A professional editor can correct all these too, but more than that. He or she can assess your book and evaluate your focus. The editor can also improve the structure and cohesiveness of your novel. Again, English professors cannot see your manuscript as a novel editor can.

Should you get a second edit?

For books that have been professionally edited but it seems still to have issues, writers are thinking if they need a second editing stage. If you don't feel satisfied with the outcome and you want to up the book's level – then don't think twice investing on a second edit.

How can the editor detect the mistakes that other service providers have missed?

If the book is edited using academic standards, then the editor must have missed important elements required for commercial publishing. For example, editors who have not worked with published authors or submitted and have their work approved by publishers might not be effective in providing the needed edit for your book. In short, some

editors might have been receiving high praises from the academic community but they might not have the experience in hitting the best-selling books lists.

A novel review or critique is often subjective. The feedback you'd get varies from one to another. But this is not how it works for an experienced novel editor. These people will provide an assessment for your book in the perspective of editors.

They know what will and what will not in your book. They will not analyze the fiction like readers and agents because these groups have subjective tastes.

The subjective responses that you will get from expert editors will be based on their years of expertise in fiction editing – meaning according to the rules of book publishing.

Which type of editor do you need?

Maybe you're asking, "What kind of editor do I need? Are all book editors qualified to edit my novel?"

If you're looking to have book line editing, any editor can help. Line editing is what you need for correcting spelling, typos and grammar.

For structural assistance such as a substantive editing service, you should hire a fiction editor that has the record of accomplishment for editing according to the genre of your book.

[TIP: For manuscript critiquing services, partial or complete, you only need to send the title page, which contains the book title and your name, along with the chapters. At this stage, you don't have to submit the copyright page, acknowledgement page, and note from the author or the dedication page. In addition, you don't also need to send the additional pages including the bibliography.]

Do you need to copyright the manuscript before having it edited?

Based on existing laws, the copyright on your novel is implied and protected. Thus, you do not need to register it with the **US Copyright Office**. It is unlikely that it will be stolen or plagiarized by an editor or anyone for that matter.

Still, could someone steal your original idea? This might be possible but it has low chances. Serious writers will not plagiarize someone else's work. In fact, they can also have overwhelming ideas of their own, but they just don't have the time to write those ideas.

Useful Tools for a Novel Writer

Check out the following for the most useful software for editing a manuscript. However, don't rely on them heavily. Use their suggestions in style and other corrections. At the end of the day, it should still be your final say.

AutoCrit

It analyzes your manuscript and offers suggestions about improvements. These suggestions may include repetition, writing style, strength, momentum and pacing. This tool will help you look into each sentence and rethink them through.

Hemingway App

If you're a writer, you know that your vocabulary must be strong. This tool helps you analyze it. It improves and provides you with feedback on the readability of your text and grade of readers who are suitable or can understand it. The tool improves your style and makes it more interesting.

Pro Writing Aid

The tool analyzes for sentence length and repetition as well as writing style. It works well that it also helps you analyzes phrases and more in your fiction. The software also checks on the readability of your text and it gets rid of grammar problems.

Smart Edit

It is one of the online tools used in editing short stories and novels, meaning you don't also need to cut text just to run it. Just like other tools, it must not be used in replacing a human editor, who can help you go through the draft.

Word Rake

This will help you cut out irrelevant words and phrases. It will improve your awareness in your writing style to make a better impression with fewer words.

After the Deadline

It is one of the most efficient tools around for checking spelling and grammar. What makes it unique is that it also gives you explanations on what can make your text more readable and flawless.

Grammarly

When you finish your draft, you can run each chapter on this tool, which can pick up issues like typos, repeated words and commas. It is one of the most intelligent editing tools around to give you recommendations and suggestions on bettering your text.

Clean Writer Pro

This tool is minimalist and does not distract you from writing. It can also convert text fast to HTML without any hassles.

Using tools are your allies for making the editing process a bit easier. However, you must not rely on them 100%. Nothing still beats a human editor who can provide you with insights on how to improve your novel overall. One can offer you with sound advice, especially if they have worked with published authors or if they have already have their own books published.

How Many Rounds of Editing Is Enough?

Now that you know self-editing tips and tricks, your next question "How many rounds of editing do I need to get it done?" That's a great one.

Round 1: Editing the structure of the chapter

How did you organize the book chapters as a whole?

Read both the introduction and conclusion. See if they relate or agree with each other. Find out if you have answered the points that you have made in the intro in the conclusion or final chapter.

Review and find out if your introduction has invoked reader's interest and curiosity. Additionally, see if you have invoked at least one of the senses in each page. Also, check for the visual elements or imageries in the chapter. Look for the weakest part of the chapter and decide if you can cut it.

In addition, check for similes and metaphors, along with other figures of speech you have used and think if they have stood out or not.

Now, check for the correct length in each paragraph and section. Were you able to break each section in the chapter? In some cases, you may have to revise and ensure that each section is broken down appropriately.

See if you have to reformat your work along with the images that you have included on it.

When checking for the chapter, you should also decide if you were happy with its tone. The tone must be appropriate for what the chapter is calling for, so you may have to adjust accordingly if needed. Finally, check out if there are gaps in writing and research that you need to elaborate or flesh out and revise.

Round 2: Editing the chapter and looking at its relation to the rest

As you know, each chapter must flow smoothly from one to the next. This will ensure that your readers will not be lost in reading the story but will keep them hooked to turn the pages.

One job you need to do well is to ensure that you are taking stock of your chapter in relation to the other chapters in the manuscript.

How do you address potential issues?

Check if you have to interview other sources of information for each chapter, if one needs it. You should also see that the central argument is clear and it stands out in the chapter.

See if you're written in a style that connects to readers through conveying an emotional story, and find out if you needed to strengthen some of the arguments you have pointed out in the book.

In this round, you must also see if you have brought out an original story or only a derivative of an original.

Next, check if the theme or central idea of your story specific to every chapter or if you have elaborated it in other chapters as well.

The chapters must fall naturally alongside each other. They must also be of the same length, each has a title, and every chapter is consistent with the book's overall tone.

For help, you may want to make some notes at some points in the chapter. You can mark it with things like **"I will go back to this later or I will discuss more of this on Chapter 6."**

In some cases, you may have to dump unnecessary chapters and write replacements too. It depends on the outcome of your reading aloud of the manuscript later. If you feel that some chapters have to be removed because they do not move the story forward, you should and write new ones.

Round 3: Editing by lines

Fine detailing is what this is about, and it is like about polishing your car. Sometimes, you are still not satisfied no matter how good it already looked. In that case, you need to know what has to be done in line editing.

- Check if you have used the active, not passive voice.
- Spot and get rid of unnecessary words. Are there adverbs and adjectives? They are both pointless, and they must die. Remember you need to provide readers only with the framework, not feed everything to them. Let them figure things out themselves. They know how to do it.

So get rid of pointless words in your writing and you'll write better fiction.

- Get rid of ALL CLICHES and overused words and phrases. They don't add value to your readers' experience. These just take up space and bore readers.
- Simplify your language and kill wordiness! What helps here is reading the book aloud to check for clunky wording.
- Do not use the same words over again.
- Check for incorrect commas placements.
- Readers don't care about your warbling. Do not use complicated language.
- Kill old metaphors.
- Get rid of the modifiers.
- Review punctuation unless you're tweeting.
- Use proper formatting (to be discussed later)
- Check for lazy writing moments.
- Use interesting subheadings. Don't begin with a boring introduction and a lazy ending.
- Cut 10% of the work. The golden rule: Brevity is clarity.
- Review for grammar and spelling errors as well as typos in writing.

Are you ready for the three rounds of editing?

Great writers recommend rewriting. According to them, "Great writing begins with rewriting." Do not be afraid to give your work a couple of editing rounds. After all, you want it to become successful – and you a great author.

At the end of the day, great writers know that it takes to write, review, edit and rewrite a manuscript a couple of times to produce a memorable fiction that people read!

Use your technique. It is up to you. It could be editing line by line, sentence by sentence, or paragraph by paragraph. What matters is you edit like crazy, put yourself on your readers' shoes and ways they'd feel reading your work and editing until perfection!

You may also seek help from friends and family members to spend some time reading your book and asking them for feedback – honest feedback.

And then, you may want to enlist the services of a good editor for help in turning your self-edited manuscript into a great book that you'd be proud to offer your readers with.

Even experienced writers sometimes need to rework their novel before it goes to the printing press. Or sometimes they have to rewrite their work after publishing (if they self-publish).

But a final word, don't do the maze without an end in sight. You don't have to spend much of your life in the reworking process. If you do, you'd suffer from the diminishing returns effects – and you become less productive than you could if you finished the book to its publishing.

Sometimes, you may have to accept that while your manuscript isn't perfect and will never be it may be as good as it is.

Formatting Manuscripts

Learning of these requirements will help you format your manuscript. Why do you need to format properly? Publishers have their house guidelines. If your manuscript do not comply with their rules due to incorrect formatting, your book will be rejected.

Aside from avoiding boldface type, multiple fonts, excessive punctuation and all caps, you must also know how to layout your manuscript. You should know how to do it properly.

Many of the setup for the manuscript document is through a paragraph dialog box. The margins are generally in "Page Layout" menu. The following is the general formatting guidelines on how to format your manuscript:

- The query letter and synopsis must be single-spaced. All other things must be double-spaced.
- If you want a header, remember that it will make your book title and last name shortened if they're too long in the upper left corner of each page.

On every side, the margin must be one inch.
Get rid of automatic paragraph spacing. There must be no spaces between paragraphs.
The manuscript must be in .doc or .docx format only.
Only use Times New Roman 12-pt.

Why is the format of your manuscript important?

Your book is likely to be rejected if it does not look just as how publishers expect it to. Many of them won't even read a single word from your work. In fact, they have their specific requirements you must follow before submission.

The format requirements must be followed. The pro editor can reveal that to you in the edit. Your novel should be reflective of what is used by industry standards.

Revision Tips

Leaving your draft for a while

In fiction writing, remember that finishing its draft is only half the job done. The other half involves the other tasks - editing and revising. Why do the editing and revising? Performing these two hard tasks is essential to make a stronger novel.

This is the time that you'll be able to locate voice inconsistencies and plot holes in the draft. By doing so, you can make needed changes to improve the prose. The following is what you need to complete the revision process.

Leave your draft for a while. Once you have completed it, you should set it aside. Some writers need at least a month before setting eyes on the fiction again. In fact, a few of them leave it for a couple of months because it is better to do it before re-reading with a fresh look at it.

The main reason is that it is harder to view it with critical eyes if you would read it right away after writing it. To schedule, mark a date for a reminder when you should go back to the fiction to re-read it.

During these times, you should do other activities to cast your thoughts away from the book.

Only by doing so is the best way on how to spot and to correct problems in your draft. According to experts, you must consider this time you're away from the manuscript as an investment. It is not a delay of your work. It is also not a delay in seeing the book in the shelves. In short, you must wait until it is needed before re-reading your manuscript.

Reading Through

It is about reading your draft slowly and carefully. You must take down notes of some issues while you're doing it. You must also take note of the character and plot development at this stage, and not yet about grammar and spelling. Quickly note about possible solutions to get rid of those issues. So without even saying, re-reading your work is about evaluating the scenes/plot on its consistency, logicality, pacing and predictability...

You must also check for your work for plot's original development. Compare the timeline you have had versus other novels you have read. Do you find any resemblance to their work? If you don't know how to do it yourself because you are new to the genre, you can ask help from another author who has experience in it.

Through re-reading, you can also check for predictability. What is it about? It is flooding your novel with clichés, which are hackneyed and tiring. They also give away too much information to the readers at once, rather than letting them realize things by themselves. It is also a mistake for writers who should not give away too much detailing but gradually develop their plot.

Being predictable is tiring to read. This is not what readers are looking for. They should not guess what happens next that easily – instead, authors must be able to keep the suspense in the story to keep readers hooked in the story.

In writing, this is called INFO DUMPING.

Use your creativity to avoid this problem in your fiction. You should learn how to transform telling into showing. When info dumping happens?

- When you're trying to explore the back story or the personal traits of your characters
- When you're using the rules the govern the world of the story

You must not fall into the trap of spelling everything to the readers. Check for parts where you have told too much.

Look for complexities. You will run the risk of overwhelming your readers and ruining your story with the use of too many subplots as well as flashbacks. You will also lose focus and momentum in the story. As you may know, these two are important elements in your fiction. They should not be lost along the way due to a very complex plot.

A too shallow plot isn't good either. It will ruin the message and purpose of your story. You should seek for balance to make the two ends meet – the novel should not be a complex or shallow story. It must be in the middle.

While reading through, you must determine the rich story and its difference from a complicated one using the following questions:

Is the complexity essential or needless for the story?

Have you included the complexity element for the smoothness of the theme? Does it just make things awkward or unnatural?

Additionally, check if the scenes do not have inconsistencies. Look for the following:

- Did the item disappear all of a sudden?
- Did you unintentionally change the name of one or two characters in the story?
- Did you abandon some of the minor characters until after hundreds of pages later in the story? (This will shock the readers, especially if the character appeared in chapter 2, and then suddenly reappeared in Chapter 10, without you mentioning them at all between chapters 3-9).

- Did some of the characters appear in some scenes, which they must not be appearing in the first place?

When re-reading, you must also check for both the beginning and ending. Both impressions are equally important for a successful story. These two ingredients can make your story memorable. You must spend time in checking the beginning and ending, and ask, "If were the reader, would I be satisfied of the beginning and the ending?"

How to check the beginning when re-reading

- Hook: Check for it as it is what grabs the reader's attention.
- Disruption: Look for the suspense and tension in the air. Did you establish enough trouble right from the start of your novel?
- Emotion: You must always try writing based on what you feel. You must add intimate details on how the character will act or react to his world along with the people around her or him.
- Back-story: You must review if you have included a minimal amount of it in your story. However, see to it that it is less and do not dump all of it in the introduction section.

How to review the ending when re-reading

In this section, you must find out if you have correctly established the story up to the conclusion. You must check it especially if you have seen that your story's direction is changing in the middle of your draft.

Write down chapters or scenes that have little to do with the moving forward of your story up to its climax and to its resolution. If you removed these sections, would the segments of the story be disrupted or would it help you establish the momentum.

So in all cases, you must pay attention to the beginning and ending of the fiction story.

Making an editing checklist

What do you do if you have few global issues, but then you have many scenes to edit? It is when the checklist becomes handy. You must arrange the scenes' list from the most difficult to make your life easier later. You should set goals, though. For example, edit three scenes daily. And on every edit, check on the voice of character A from the start to the finish. Additionally, check on the group conversations and see if they are not confusing.

Getting feedback

Getting feedback is useful for insights. The feedback you'd get must be under categories for organization. The strengths, the weaknesses and the improvements to make are examples. You can modify as needed. You may even want to get initiative from reviewers and ask them some questions. They can be helpful to spot the portions to edit in your novel. For example, ask them about the structure.

Think about their pointers and comments. However, you are the final one to decide. Only use their review to guide you during the revision. Do not let them define your work; only you know it well.

Expert Quotes for New and Emerging Writers

Do you want to write better? Check out these expert quotes from the most successful authors and writers. Hope you pick up some good advice from them.

William Faulkner

"Let the writer take up surgery or bricklaying if he is interested in technique. There is no mechanical way to get the writing done, no shortcut. The young writer would be a fool to follow a theory. Teach yourself by your own mistakes; people learn only by error. The good artist believes that nobody is good enough to give him advice. He has supreme vanity. No matter how much he admires the old writer, he wants to beat him."

Paul Theroux

"Notice how many of the Olympic athletes effusively thanked their mothers for their success? "She drove me to my practice at four in the morning," etc. Writing is not figure skating or skiing. Your mother will not make you a writer. My advice to any young person who wants to write is: leave home."

Neil Gaiman

"Start telling the stories that only you can tell, because there'll always be better writers than you and there'll always be smarter writers than you. There will always be people who are much better at doing this or doing that – but you are the only you."

E.B. White

"Advice to young writers who want to get ahead without any annoying delays: don't write about Man, write about a man."

Hilary Mantel

"Read *Becoming a Writer* by Dorothea Brande. Then do what it says, including the tasks you think are impossible. You will particularly hate the advice to write first thing in the morning, but if you can manage it, it might well be the best thing you ever do for yourself. This book is about becoming a writer from the inside out. Many later advice manuals derive from it. You don't really need any others, though if you want to boost your confidence, "how to" books seldom do any harm. You can kick-start a whole book with some little writing exercise."

Michael Moorcock

"Introduce your main characters and themes in the first third of your novel. If you are writing a plot-driven genre novel make sure all your major themes/plot elements are introduced in the first third, which you can call the introduction. Develop your themes and characters in your second third, the development. Resolve your themes, mysteries and so on in the final third, the resolution."

Rose Tremain

"In the planning stage of a book, don't plan the ending. It has to be earned by all that will go before it."

Will Self

"Always carry a note-book. And I mean always. The short-term memory only retains information for three minutes; unless it is committed to paper you can lose an idea for ever."

Tara Moss

"Write. Start writing today. Start writing right now. Don't write it right, just write it –and then make it right later. Give yourself the mental freedom to enjoy the process, because the process of writing is a long one. Be wary of "writing rules" and advice. Do it your way."

Zadie Smith

"Protect the time and space in which you write. Keep everybody away from it, even the people who are most important to you."

Jonathan Franzen

"It's doubtful that anyone with an internet connection at his workplace is writing good fiction."

Zadie Smith

"Work on a computer that is disconnected from the internet."

Jonathan Franzen

"Interesting verbs are seldom very interesting."

Anton Chekhov

"Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass."

Diana Athill

"Read it aloud to yourself because that's the only way to be sure the rhythms of the sentences are OK (prose rhythms are too complex and subtle to be thought out—they can be got right only by ear)."

Bonus Section: Tips to Get the Book Published

1. Complete the book. The completed one is the work done to the professional standards if this novel would hit the shelves soon. While an agent may edit your work, you must not rely on them to do it.
2. Look for agents. First step is to collect a list and a pool of agents. Look for those you will be happy to work with!
3. Write the query letter as well as the proposal and synopsis.
4. Submit the manuscript to different agents.
5. Accept and process rejections, but do not stop submitting!
6. Choose the right agent. Then, discuss and apply edits. Agents will be able to provide you with insights and advice on what can make your work better in order to pitch and sell it.
7. Be patient.
8. Select the right publisher for you, and then again, discuss and apply edits. Just like agents, publishers also have their idea on what their markets want. At this stage, they might ask for many edits. You have to be flexible but also you should be firm about your definite ideas on how you want the novel to turn out.
9. Prepare for the publication. Strengthen your online and social media presence. You may also want to start your blog and market yourself on Twitter and Facebook.
10. Continue engaging yourself for publicity, and connect with readers as they grow in number.

Conclusion

Publishing a novel is difficult.

Completing the manuscript for publishing is as hard.

When you're done writing, you must do the editing.

Whether you self-edit or hire an editor, the most important thing is you ensure that your story is worth reading.

What makes it so? Go back to reading the e-book for a guide.

If you self-edit, follow the tips that we've presented above on what to check: **plot, characters, setting, conflict, and so on.**

You must also get rid of the writing and editing mistakes in your manuscript.

If you need help from the pros, go back to our guide on editors and learn how they work.

Finally, always remember the tips from the authors themselves.

All the best for your first novel

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